



11.0 CONCLUSIONS and FUTURE STUDY

11.1 SUMMARY OF PHASE II FEASIBILITY

Chapters 1 and 2 of this report provide a background, introduction and summary of the structure of this project. Numerous details, phone calls and meetings were conducted during the course of the project, but the major goals around which these detailed activities were focused are summarized in Chapters 3 through 10.

Ridership and Revenue Estimates: The ridership forecasting work involved two principal areas of research. First, the Project Team developed 2030 population and employment forecasts for Kankakee County at the quarter-section level near KACOT stations and for sections away from stations. This information was then used as input by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) in applying the parameters of the KACOT commuter rail service to their regional travel demand model. The CMAP model results showed a ridership level of 8,300 passenger trips per weekday in 2030. The forecasted ridership represented Kankakee County travelers connecting to Metra Electric District service at Peotone. Since the CMAP model does not adequately address external travel from points south of Kankakee County, a separate estimate for this unique travel market was made based on 2000 Census Journey to Work data. This estimate added 200 daily trips to the CMAP result, or a total weekday ridership of 8,500 passenger trips. This level of ridership would translate into an estimated \$5.5 million in annual fare revenue for the proposed KACOT commuter rail service.

Transit Supportive Land Use: A Transit Supportive Land Use Workshop was held on the morning of December 15, 2006 in Manteno and was followed by an afternoon bus tour of Metra station areas where the transit oriented development (TOD) principals have been applied. The purpose of the workshop and bus tour was to familiarize the participants with transit supportive planning principles and precedents, and to educate them on related criteria in the federal evaluation process for the New Starts funding program. Two products were provided to workshop participants. A sixteen-page Transit Supportive Planning Primer describes the concepts and principles of TOD, including representative examples using maps and photos. In addition, a CD containing several published research documents and a list of useful web site addresses was provided.



More information on this subject is provided in Chapter 4. The handouts distributed in the workshop and photos from the bus tour are available on the KACOT web site (www.kacotstudy.com) on the Resources page.

Independent Rail Alternative: The CN Railway did not accept the Phase I alternative of KACOT making improvements to the railroad's mainline infrastructure to triple its capacity, in exchange for shared use of its right of way (ROW). Instead, they offered to sell or lease land from its exceptionally wide ROW for KACOT to build its own separate commuter railroad.

The railroad provided track schematics and valuation maps of the alignment for the team to make conceptual plans for a commuter railroad complying with its offer. The project team made field trips on which they viewed the line from public property. A workable concept was created and is documented in Chapter 5 and its appendices.

The Project Team submitted the concept to the CN for its review, calling specific attention to an approximately 1 ½ mile long section from Broadway Street in the Village of Bradley to the Kankakee Amtrak station south of Court Street in downtown Kankakee. This portion of the alignment is referred to in Chapter 5 as the Kankakee Single Track Section. The CN reviewed the concept and generally acknowledged that it complied with its offer, except that the Kankakee Single Track Section was not acceptable; KACOT tracks could not separate the CN mainline from the NS Interchange yard nor pass under the current Court Street overpass. These restrictions may require a CN-ROW-based commuter rail line to stop north of that Section at Bradley. One alternative to a CN-ROW-based commuter rail line south of Bradley would be to exit the railroad ROW and design a street-running service through Bradley and central Kankakee and reenter the current CN ROW north of the Kankakee River bridge. This would require the vehicles to be designed more like streetcars than locomotive hauled trains, as has been done with diesel multiple units on the New Jersey Transit River Line. Another alternative would be to route the line to the west of the NS-interchange yard and for the project to pay for a new Court Street underpass adjacent to the current one.

These alternatives are presented in Chapter 5 and will need to be evaluated in greater detail in future phases of the KACOT program.

Kankakee County Commuter Transit

Phase II Feasibility Study



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Institutional Issues: This work was performed for the Kankakee County Commuter Transit Task Force which is composed of one state agency, two county governments and seven municipalities. Interaction with the CN Railway is reflected in the work on the Independent Rail Alternative discussed above. Similarly work with the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP) is discussed in the Ridership and Revenue Estimates also discussed above.

Work on the project involved meetings and discussions with several other government entities, railroads and professional organizations. Principal among those were meetings with Metra, River Valley Metro (the Kankakee County local bus transit agency), and the Northeastern Illinois Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). Those additional interactions are summarized in Chapter 6.

Cost Issues: Typical funding shares from federal, state and local sources for the capital project were discussed with the Task Force. Perhaps more important than capital cost and typically more difficult to address locally is the question of how to fund the annual O&M deficit associated with a transit operation. Though other funding mechanisms are possible, as with the six-county Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) to the north the most likely committed long term funding source for this annual expense is a sales tax.

Many uncertainties still exist and need to be resolved before the alignment, station stops, maintenance facility and even transit mode (rail or bus) are firmly defined. Nevertheless, a rough capital cost estimate was completed at the end of this study on the most detailed section of the alignment, the minimum operable segment (MOS), between Peotone and Bradley. The resulting capital cost estimate was \$298.9 million. Within that amount, \$47.1 million are costs new from the Phase I cost estimate and associated with purchasing CN ROW and building a totally new railroad.

Additional information on this is provided in Chapter 7.

Public Education and Outreach Program: This activity was planned to cover the full length of the project from the issuance of the very first task orders to close-out of the contract. It was led by a local resident and civil leader who is experienced as a public involvement facilitator.



The effort:

- Identified and met with minority and disenfranchised groups in the area to get them involved.
- Developed a database of names of organizations and individuals for a mailing list.
- Generated information handouts and two newsletters for the public.
- Defined the web site requirements for making information available to the public and collect questions, feedback and names for the database.
- Created a Kankakee Residents Team to advise the KACOT effort and help in soliciting participation.
- Conferred with the Will County United Way, the Will County Land Use Department and other local officials to identify persons in eastern Will County who had expressed interest in transit over the past several years.
- Produced standard display boards that can be used by the Task Force in public meetings after the project.
- Held a Kankakee County (Public) Gathering on May 31, 2007 in which remote polling key pads were used by all attendees to respond to questions raised during the presentations.
- Held an Eastern Will County (Public) Gathering on June 28, 2007, also using remote polling.

The newsletter, presentation materials and polling results from the public gatherings are available on the Resources and Current Activity pages on the project web site (www.kacotstudy.com). Additional detail on the Public Education and Outreach activities are provided in Chapter 8.

Program Web Site: The KACOT-II team wrote a functional specification describing a web site that would be created during the project but structured to be carried forward as a long term KACOT Program web site to be used by project phases that follow this study. Each succeeding phase would update and expand the site as appropriate so that it would become a living digital library and public information source for the KACOT program.

At the County's request, the web site was set up on a separate server from the Kankakee County server where the County web site is maintained. However, the appearance of the KACOT site is specifically designed to look like additional pages on the County site. The KACOT site can be reached by a link on the County site or directly at www.kacotstudy.com. With the conclusion of the Phase II Feasibility project



the site and all linked documents are being transferred to the County for the County to install on its server with little or no apparent down time to the public.

More details on this web site are provided in Chapter 9. A current version edition of the home and four other basic web pages are provided in Appendix A-9.

Meetings: The KACOT Task Force was created in early 2003 and has generally met every two months since then. Eight KACOT Task Force meetings were held during the course of this phase II feasibility study. PowerPoint presentations were prepared for each of these meetings and can be accessed on the Resources page of the program web site. A summary of the material discussed during those seven meetings is provided in Chapter 10.

Project Management: In addition to routine project management activities associated with scope, budget, schedule and client interface, this task also generate the system map, a tri-fold executive summary, and this final report. All of those are available on the Resources page of the program web site.

11.2 THE METRA FEASIBILITY STUDY PROCESS

In the 1990's Metra published a diagram showing a flow chart for feasibility studies on potential new lines in the Metra system. The chart was published in requests for proposals for a series of feasibility studies on lines that Metra was considering. That flow chart is shown in Figure 11-1. The Phase I and II scopes shown in that Figure have not been rigorously followed by Metra, but nevertheless serve as a good guideline for the materials Metra expects to develop for its own lines. The chart also represents sound professional judgment on the kinds of things that should indeed be in feasibility studies.

The RFPs and consultant work scopes for the two KACOT feasibility studies generally followed the list of bulleted items in this flow chart, though as indicated in Chapter 2, the combined professional judgments of Kankakee County, the Task Force and the consultant resulted in setting the scope priorities within the budgetary mandates of each project.

This project completes the Phase I and II process in Figure 11-1 for the KACOT Program. Specifically, the four bullets shown for Phase II work are addressed in the current project as follows:



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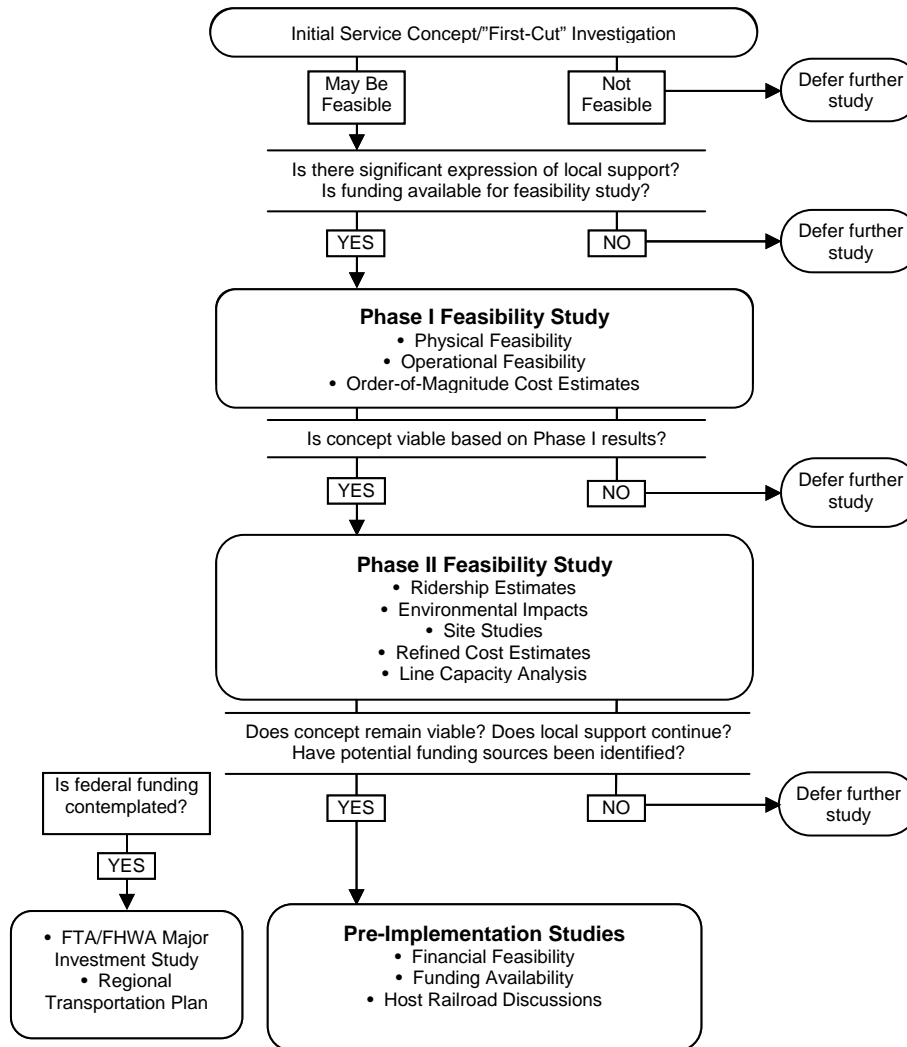


Figure 11-1. Metra Evaluation Process for New Lines

- Ridership Estimates:** Chapter 3 summarizes the ridership estimates generated by the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning (CMAP), using their sophisticated regional travel demand model. This is clearly the most appropriate transportation model available for estimating ridership on this specific line. Over the last several years, CMAP (and their predecessor agency the Chicago Area Transportation Study) have made significant refinements to their transportation model to more accurately predict use of transit investments. These revisions have been scrutinized and accepted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA).



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- **Environmental Impacts:** No significant environmental issues were identified in the Phase I study. The Phase II study reaffirms a baseline alternative that uses existing railroad right of way and the likely reinstallation of the same number of tracks that were removed in the 1960s and/or 1990s. The preliminary choice of a storage and maintenance facility is currently a bus maintenance and storage facility and a converted industrial site. Although street running may ultimately be required over a short section in Bradley and central Kankakee, that option is not certain, is commonly used in other American cities, and is similar to interurban operations in the area in the first half of the 20th century. In any case, no specific street routes have been agreed to with local authorities so the alignment remains very general. A more firm definition of the need for street running and the specific alignment is appropriate work to be undertaken in a New Starts Alternatives Analysis. As a result, no significant environmental issues are foreseen for the baseline system proposed herein.
- **Site Studies:** Some station locations have not changed from the Phase I study (Bourbonnais, Kankakee Depot, Exit 308). In other municipalities, the relocations of stations were initiated by other government entities that have their own visions of feasible stations in the area. These relocated stations are in Peotone (Metra project), Manteno (a Village initiative) and Bradley (a Village choice). No new station site studies were made on behalf of those efforts. In contrast, the clear statement by the CN of not allowing passenger trains on their freight line required a “site study” of the entire railroad corridor to identify a concept for a commuter rail alignment and confirm the availability of sufficient ROW. That is reported in Chapter 5.
- **Refined Cost Estimate:** The Phase I study generated reasonably detailed cost estimates for a scenario involving CN shared track from University Park. The starting point for the KACOT service is now likely to be 7-miles south of there and will require a separate ROW purchased from the CN. Single tracking is sufficient for the MOS. A cost estimate was completed for the new MOS. However, south of the MOS the alignment through Bradley and Kankakee is problematic and open to several alternatives. Bus is also an alternative mode to be considered. Because there are so many unknowns, a new cost study for the FBO would need to be performed parametrically, which is far beyond the scope of a feasibility study of this type. Generally, the cost estimates from Phase I still represent a ball-park estimate for a rail service in the corridor with the MOS cost update serving as a gauge for changes from Phase I. More specific studies selecting modes and alignments are needed before additional meaningful cost estimate can be performed.



- **Line Capacity Analysis:** As noted above, the CN made it clear that it does not want KACOT passenger trains on its freight railroad and that the project must build its own separate tracks. As a result, KACOT trains movements will interface with other railroads at specific crossing points (interlockings) rather than as a mix of passenger and freight trains following, meeting and generally commingling along shared tracks. This focus on interlocking-to-interlocking train movements is a much simpler operational analysis that does not require a sophisticated and costly railroad line capacity analysis for this phase of the work.

11.3 THE FTA NEW STARTS PROCESS

The Metra Phase I and II study phases discussed above precede and feed into the New Starts program of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Two flow charts representing that FTA process are shown in **Figures 11-2** and **11-3**. The process generally involves four well-defined steps: alternatives analysis (AA), preliminary engineering (PE), final design (FD) and construction. Starting with the PE phase, the FTA selects a project management oversight (PMO) consultant to assist the FTA in evaluating the project submittals. The PMO consultant reviews the project documentation in detail and usually goes head-to-head with the project consultant that created the documentation. This flaying consultants process is intended to ensure that the project has merit and warrants continued funding in the next phase of the New Starts process.



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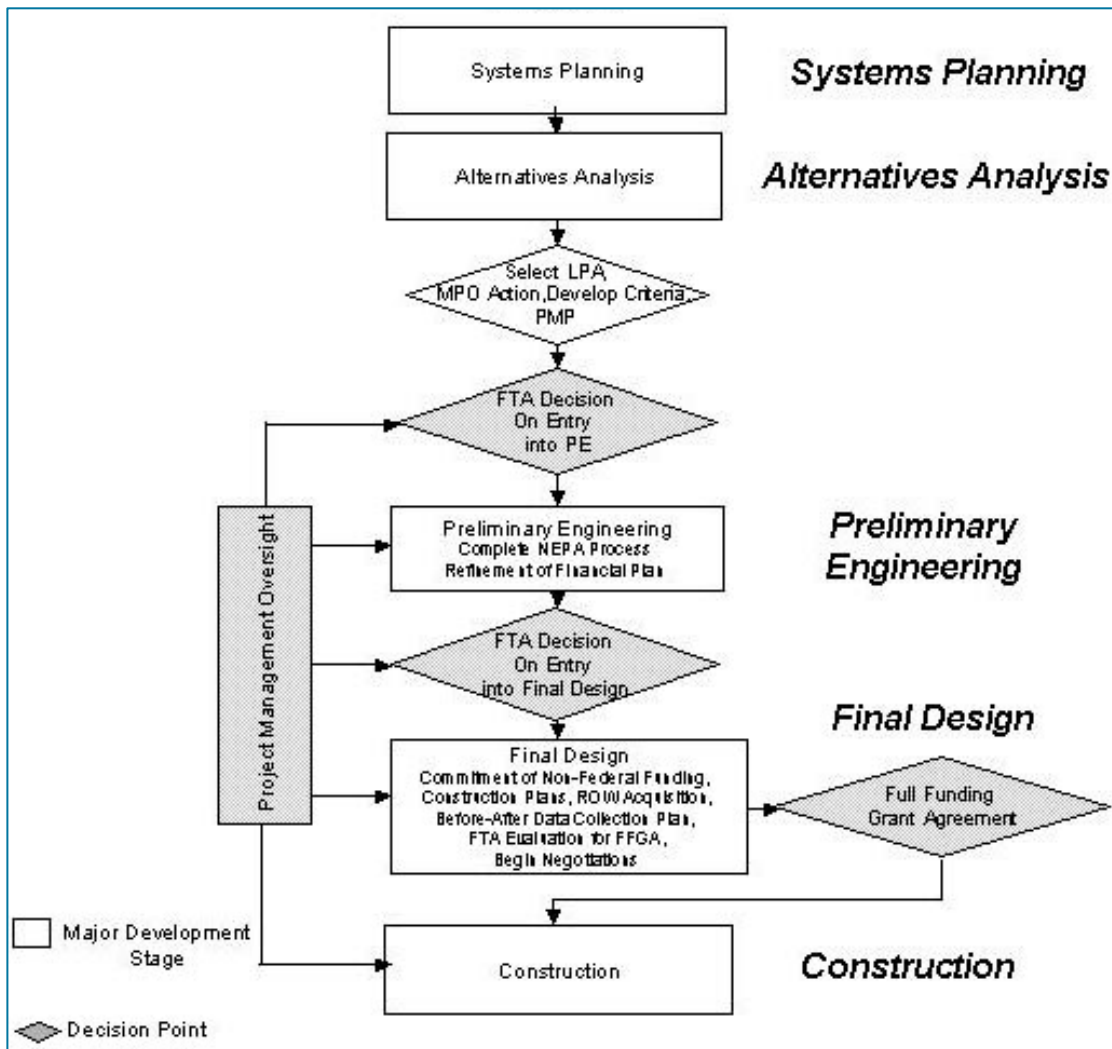
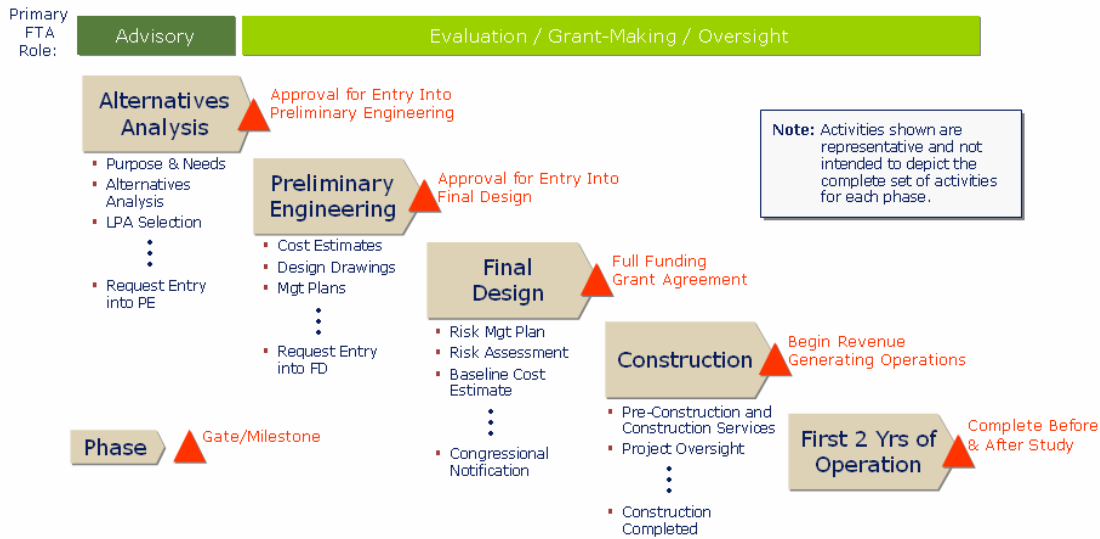


Figure 11-2. FTA New Starts Planning and Project Development Process



Process Overview

The current project development process is complicated by a lack of clear definitions of the activities and requirements at each phase and gate/milestone.



A simple, high-level roadmap, such as the example on this slide, can be used to clearly communicate the key activities to project sponsors and other stakeholders.

Figure 11-3. Recent (February 2007) Graphic of the FTA New Starts Process

Since the KACOT project has completed the requirements of the Metra Feasibility Studies, it is now ready to begin this FTA process with an application for funding for an AA. Applications for AA funding are typically submitted to the local US Congressperson between June and September of each year for inclusion in the FTA's budget for the next fiscal year.

11.4 LOCAL ACTION

As noted in Chapter 1, the Kankakee County local bus transit agency, River Valley Metro, recently moved into new facilities that can also be used as an intermodal transit station for KACOT. The County relied heavily on obtaining federal funding for that facility. Because of that priority, the original intended pursuit of FTA New Starts funding for the KACOT project for an alternatives analysis starting in the fall of 2007 was postponed until 2008. Therefore, following the completion of this Phase II feasibility study, work will



be suspended on the KACOT project. The likely next activity will be a funding application for the AA work in the summer of 2008.

11.5 IMPACT OF OTHER RELATED PROJECTS

A number of other moderate to major sized projects are being discussed in the area that could impact this project. These other projects are in various stages of planning or engineering. Future phases of work on this KACOT project will need to monitor the progress and commitments of these projects, remain flexible to respond to their impacts, and provide inputs to them to ensure that KACOT alternatives are not foreclosed unnecessarily by the actions of others.

These other projects are discussed in more detail in Chapter 1 and include the following:

- South Suburban Airport (SSA)
- Metra Electric District (MED) Extension
- Metra SouthEast Service (SES)
- East-West Freeway (connecting I-65 and I-57 through Kankakee or Will Counties)
- Amtrak Illinois Intra-State Service
- Brookmont Boulevard Underpass of the CN
- High Speed Rail serving the SSA
- Chicago Region Environmental And Transportation Efficiency Project (CREATE)